



## News Release

FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge  
19th Judicial Circuit  
Lake County  
Waukegan, Illinois 60085-4359

Date of Release: 4/21/2014  
Point of Contact: John T. Phillips  
Diane Flory  
Telephone: 847.377.4500  
847.377.3818

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Waukegan, Illinois

### LIBERTY BELL AWARDS

Every year the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit participates in the observance of Law Day, a day set aside to celebrate "our great heritage of liberty, justice, and equality under law. In 1961, Congress, by joint resolution, designated May 1<sup>st</sup> as the official Law Day date. As part of the Court's Law Day activities, Liberty Bell Awards are presented to individuals and/or organizations. Since 2005, these awards have been given in Memory of Judge Thomas R. Smoker, a judge in Lake County who passed away in 2004.

Originated in Michigan in the '60's, the Liberty Bell Award is given to individuals and/or organizations for their outstanding service and for their dedication to further the administration of justice. The criteria is broad but generally recognizes those who have promoted a better understanding of the rule of law; encouraged a greater respect for law and the courts; stimulated a sense of civic responsibility; and contributed to good government in the community. These awards have been presented by the Circuit Court of Lake County since 1996. The recipients of the award are selected by a vote of the sitting circuit judges of Lake County.

The 2014 Liberty Bell Awards are presented to:

#### **The Veteran's Treatment and Assistance Court (VTAC) Mentoring Program**

VTAC is a collaboration of numerous agencies including the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court and Adult Probation Services, the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center, the Public Defender's Office, the State's Attorney's Office, the Lake County Bar Association, the Health Department, NICASA, the Veteran's Assistance Commission, Waukegan Police, the Sheriff's Department, the College of Lake County Volunteer Program and other community partners.

How it works: The justice involved veteran signs a petition indicating his/her willingness to complete a program. If the veteran is found acceptable, treatment services are promptly set up by the VA and treatment providers. Supervision of the case is conducted by the Adult Probation Services Division, and court hearings are held every Friday morning where the veteran must appear to have his/her status reviewed while in the program.

The mission of **The Mentoring Program** is to support the veterans through their readjustment to civilian life and assist them navigate the court, VA and treatment systems. It provides the active and supportive relationship between the mentor and veteran and is essential in assisting the justice involved veteran's success in the program. Therefore, each veteran accepted into the program is

assigned a mentor. The lasting effects improve the veteran's chances for sobriety, stability and law abiding behavior. And, most importantly, the mentors act as a friend, advocate and ally to their assigned justice involved veteran. "I am so sincerely honored to have the opportunity to thank each and every one of our mentors who have made the Mentoring Program the outstanding successful program that it is today," said Chief Judge John Phillips. "Their volunteerism and willingness to give of their time to help others who have served our country are part of the contributing factors that make the program work. It couldn't be done without their commitment and dedication."

The 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit's VTAC mentors include Marie V. Honeywell, U.S. Army; James E. Gamble, U.S. Air Force; Larry Carrier, U.S. Army Vietnam veteran; Albert Romero, Active Duty, U.S. Marine Corps; Willie Thornton, Active Duty, U.S. Navy; Kirby A. Wagner, U.S. Naval Reserves; Martin Claussen, U.S. Army; Peter Ochoa, U.S. Marine Corps Vietnam veteran; Steve Friedlander, U.S. Air Force; Jonathan Arenas, Stanley Villarreal, U.S. Marine Corps Vietnam veteran; and Peer Support Specialist, Lake-McHenry Veterans and Family Services/LCHD. Anyone interested in becoming a mentor may contact Rudy Martin in Adult Probation Services at 847.377.3964.

**The Exchange Club of Gurnee** is a local affiliate of the National Exchange Club. It is an all-volunteer national services organization for men and women, who want to serve their community, develop leadership skills and enjoy new friendships. The Clubs sponsor a wide range of activities with the principal areas of service being youth, Americanism, community service and child abuse prevention. The Exchange Club of Gurnee has proudly donated funds for the use of those involved in the Drug, Mental Health and Veteran's courts. Exchange members have also donated their time to provide transportation for those involved in the specialty courts and show additional support through their attendance at the graduation ceremonies.

"The Exchange Club of Gurnee has been consistently involved and has steadily provided the time and talents of its members in supporting our Drug, Mental Health and Veterans' Court Programs," said Chief Judge Phillips. "I would like to thank the Exchange Club membership for their outstanding service and positive impact that they have made in the community."

This year, the honorees will be recognized at a meeting of the Lake County Bar Association at noon at Waukegan City Hall on Wednesday, April 23, 2014.

###

Press is invited.

[www.19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us](http://www.19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us)